

## Louis Hébert, Apothecary (1575–1627)

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The focus for the front cover of *CJHP* in 2003 is important Canadian medical institutions and discoveries.

Louis Hébert was the first French apothecary in the New World, the first magistrate of Quebec, and one of the first colonists of New France. Born in Paris in 1575, Hébert made his first journey to Canada in 1604, arriving in the European settlement of Port Royal (now Annapolis Royal), Nova Scotia, where he remained and practised as an apothecary until 1607 and then again from 1610 to 1613. Soon after his arrival, he started to grow medicinal plants and to farm. His cordial relationship with the local Aborigines, the Mi'kmaqs, aided him in his quest to learn the medicinal properties of the local flora, which he used in caring for colonists who were ill. In 1613, the British captured the colony and Hébert was forced to return to France.

In 1617, Hébert and his family eagerly accepted the opportunity to return to the New World with Samuel de Champlain, settling in Quebec City. Records indicate that he cared for colonists, Aborigines, and Jesuits alike.<sup>1</sup> Champlain, who valued the skills of the courageous colonist, appointed him magistrate of the colony. Hébert divided the last years of his life between legal and medical duties but still found time to continue his agricultural work. He died in 1627, after an accidental fall.



Apothecary Louis Hébert cultivated native drug plants, including *Arum* (Jack-in-the-pulpit), *Eupatorium* (boneset), *Verbascum* (mullein), and *Hydrastis* (golden seal). In this painting by Robert Thom, he is shown examining specimens offered by a Mi'kmaq. Artwork reproduced with permission of Pfizer Canada.

### Sources

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### Reference

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